

United States-Mexico Fisheries Cooperation Program

Basic Instrument

There is no formal instrument establishing the United States-Mexico Fisheries Cooperation Program (FCP). The U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) and the predecessor agency to the Mexican Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación (SAGARPA) informally agreed in 1983 to meet annually to review the broad range of issues involved in the bilateral fisheries relationship. There are three memoranda of understanding (MOU) since agreed to by NOAA Fisheries Service and SAGARPA to formalize different aspects of the fisheries relationship: (1) MEXUS-Golfo research program, (2) MEXUS-Pacífico research program, and (3) information exchange.

Implementing Legislation

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Act), particularly 16 U.S.C. 1822(a), authorizes the negotiation of international fishery agreements to further the purposes, policy, and provisions of the Act.

Member Nations

United States and Mexico

Budget

There are no funds specifically budgeted for the program; costs are assumed in the operating budgets of the participating NOAA Fisheries offices. Annual costs of the program including staff time, travel, translation services, and miscellaneous expenses total about \$60,000 annually, during years when Fishery Cooperation Talks (FCTs) occur. This does not include the cost of various working group meetings, such as the annual MEXUS-Golfo and MEXUS-Pacífico meetings or special meetings.

Representation

The annual FCT meetings are coordinated by NOAA Fisheries and Mexico's National Commission of Aquaculture and Fishing (CONAPESCA). Both agencies often invite other agencies to participate in the meetings. NOAA Fisheries has invited representatives from other NOAA line offices, the Food and Drug Administration, Department of Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of State, as well as state government officials. CONAPESCA has invited other government units such as the Instituto Nacional de Pesca, and the Procurator General para el Ambiente (PROFEPA), the Secretaría de Comercio, the Secretaría de Salud, and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

The participants have agreed to periodically review the United States-Mexican fisheries relationship. The FCT discussions serve to reinforce the longstanding cooperative relationship between the United States and Mexico on fishery issues. Formal and informal sessions provide opportunities to exchange information and discuss major issues.

B. Programs:

Ideally, NOAA Fisheries and CONAPESCA meet annually; alternating meetings between the United States and Mexico, and additional working group meetings are held as needed. The two science working groups, MEXUS-Golfo and MEXUS-Pacífico, also strive to meet annually. Other working group meetings are held as required on such matters as enforcement, management, aquaculture, and other issues.

Initially, the participants decided to omit the most contentious issues and focus on those issues where it was possible to reach some agreement on mutually beneficial projects. As a result, considerable progress was made during the 1980s in expanding

cooperative research programs and better understanding each country's fishery laws and policies. The relationship matured during the 1990s; recent meetings have included discussions on management, enforcement, recreational fisheries, marine mammals and endangered species. The meetings help to inform participants of national programs affecting the other country. The participants in recent years have widened the scope of some research projects to include coordinated management and other issues.

C. Conservation and Management Measures:

Conservation and management issues are generally the major topics discussed at the meetings. The protection of marine mammals and endangered species (especially turtles and mammals) were for several years the focus of discussions. More recently, there have been information exchanges and a sharing of management experiences on various fishery resources. Shared interests and goals regarding participation in the various tuna RFMOs and other international bodies such as FAO COFI, WTO and the UNGA are also discussed.

D. Meetings

The most recent FCP meetings were held August 20-22, 2013, La Jolla, California, along with meetings of the MEXUS-Golfo and MEXUS- Pacífico scientific working groups. Prior to this, the last FCT meetings were held February 7-9, 2012, in Mazatlan, Mexico. The delegations to the FTC meeting discussed sustainable fisheries management, the protection and conservation of species such as sea turtles, enforcement cooperation, aquaculture, collaborative scientific research in the framework of the MEXUS-Golfo and MEXUS- Pacífico bilateral agreements, and the participation of the two countries in fisheries related international organizations. Parties agreed to exchange information and to work together in these areas. Both sides have agreed to continue regular, bilateral exchanges and hope to convene another round of FCP meetings in 2014.

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